

# *The Origins of* **NATO** **THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION**

## **European Economic Recovery and European Integration**

**I**n the aftermath of the total defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945, Europe struggled to recover from the ravages of occupation and war. The wartime Grand Alliance between the Western democracies and the Soviet Union collapsed, and postwar negotiations for a peace settlement foundered in the Council of Foreign Ministers. By 1947 peace treaties with Italy and the defeated Axis satellites were finally concluded after protracted and acrimonious negotiations between the former allies, but the problem of a divided and occupied Germany remained unsettled.

In April 1947 Secretary of State George Marshall returned from a frustrating round of negotiations in the Council of Foreign Ministers in Moscow to report that the United States and the Soviet Union were at loggerheads over a prescription for the future of central Europe and that the Soviets appeared ready to drag out talks. “We cannot ignore the factor of time involved here,” Marshall warned. “The recovery of Europe is far slower than had been expected. Disintegrating forces are becoming evident. The patient is sinking while the doctors deliberate. . . . Action cannot await compromise through exhaustion.”<sup>1</sup>

West Europeans felt vulnerable not only to a possibly resurgent Germany but even more to communist expansion by subversion and the threat of direct Soviet military action. The first stages of postwar economic reconstruction were painfully slow. Europe faced shortages of housing, basic foodstuffs, raw materials (especially coal, the key element in

power production), and dollar reserves to pay for necessary imports. The war had rent the social fabric of many nations, setting social class against social class and ethnic group against ethnic group. Political tensions were exacerbated by the participation of many Europeans in collaborationist regimes and others in armed resistance. Masses of Europeans, radicalized by the experience of war and German occupation, demanded major social and economic change and appeared ready to enforce these demands with violence. The national Communist Parties of Western Europe stood ready to exploit this discontent in order to advance the aims of the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup>

U.S. leaders were acutely aware of both the dangers of renewed conflict in Europe and of their ability to influence the shape of a postwar European political and social order. Fresh from the wartime experience of providing major Lend-Lease aid to allied nations and assistance to millions of refugees through the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, they recognized the critical role massive U.S. aid could play in promoting a peaceful and democratic reconstruction.

The U.S. domestic political picture, however, initially appeared unfavorable to dramatic action. Congressional elections in 1946 produced a Republican majority in both Houses of Congress. President Harry S. Truman’s leadership was repudiated, and the strongly conservative Republican majority appeared set upon a major reduction in government expenditures. Tensions ran high between the two major American political parties.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of intense partisan political warfare, the Truman administration and Congress, laying aside a century and a half of isolationist tradition, agreed to a vast expansion of peacetime international leadership responsibilities.

Both the Marshall Plan initiative and subsequently NATO were part of a U.S. response to Europe's crises that viewed greater European integration as critical to successful resistance to the communist challenge and as the platform for building a peaceful Europe. In the early years of the process, the United States prodded its reluctant allies toward greater cooperation, while leaders of the European states—although recognizing the need to integrate their resources—continued to insist on the primacy of the national state.

U.S. enthusiasm for European integration had a variety of motivations. A coordinated program of European economic reconstruction and defense was cost-effective, a key point with a Truman administration that was struggling to win congressional and public approval for an enormous outlay of American money to finance its aid programs. European integration had an equally important role in preventing the recurrence of conflicts between European states, which had twice drawn the United States into war. Of particular importance, of course, were French-German relations.



George C. Marshall, Secretary of State from January 1947-January 1949, after whom the Marshall Plan was named.

(Department of State photo)

By 1947 U.S. officials recognized that European reconstruction would fail without a major contribution from occupied Germany, but rebuilding the German economy was bound to cause severe concern among its former enemies, above all France. Integration offered a path for both rebuilding Germany's economy and binding the new German state to its former enemies with ties of mutual interest. Subsequently, integration proved a useful vehicle for bringing Germany into European defense arrangements.

In addition to these motivations, U.S. officials were convinced of the benefits that both the United States and Europe would gain from an enlarged single

market and a common defense and foreign policy. U.S. enthusiasm for integration programs was strongly influenced by a small but active group of European federalists, especially Jean Monnet, who had close personal relations with American leaders and were strongly pro-American in outlook. Monnet's vision of a United States of Europe struck a responsive chord among Americans. Winston Churchill's early champion-ship of European unity further popularized the idea in the United States. (Ironically, Churchill favored a united Europe without British participation.) U.S. support for European integration was couched in terms of the creation of an Atlantic partnership that would enhance prosperity and security on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>4</sup>

## Roots of the Atlantic Alliance

The economic recovery of Europe was inseparable from some solution to the unsettled postwar political situation. It became evident to European leaders during 1947 that recovery of their war-shattered national economies could not be accomplished without political and military security. Moreover, these leaders were convinced that such military security arrangements would require the involvement of the United States. The first steps

toward the military corollary to the Marshall Plan came from Britain and France at the end of 1947. The failure of the Soviet Union and the West to come to terms for a postwar German peace settlement at the Moscow Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in March and April 1947 had been an important impetus in the launching of the Marshall Plan effort.

In June 1947 Secretary of State George Marshall took the next major step and formally invited the European states to submit plans for a European recovery effort. Pointing to a "dislocation of the entire fabric of the European economy" as a result of a decade of "abnormal conditions," Secretary Marshall offered assistance

directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos. Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist.

Secretary Marshall's initiative, carefully framed to avoid confrontation with the Soviet Union and coordinated with the major U.S. allies, provided the basis for a European response. Britain and France together with the Benelux nations—Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg—took the lead in organizing a conference of the Committee of European Economic Cooperation,

which met in Paris June 27-July 2, 1947, to discuss a coordinated program of economic cooperation aimed at integrated economic recovery. Italy and Greece pledged their cooperation. The Marshall Plan, launched as a joint U.S.-European program, pointed the way to European economic union and was America's first step toward becoming a super-power with global interests and responsibilities.

The conference in Paris in the summer of 1947 proved critical in defining a security response to threats to political stability in Western Europe. Soviet Premier Stalin initially permitted the states of Eastern Europe to join the discussions and sent a Soviet delegation as well. He concluded, however, that participation in the Marshall Plan threatened his hold over Eastern Europe and would mean abandoning his plans for Soviet postwar reconstruction. The Soviets withdrew from the preliminary talks and forced the East European states to decline invitations to attend the subsequent organizational meeting. In September 1947, a Soviet-organized meeting in Poland set up the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) whose major purpose was to coordinate action against the Marshall Plan. While the Soviet Union assumed the major onus for the division of Europe, the Communist Parties of Western Europe, which had initially taken a cautious approach toward



Secretary Marshall's offer, simultaneously began a campaign of strikes and demonstrations designed to undercut the initiative.<sup>6</sup>

At the conclusion of the London session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in December 1947, the East-West deadlock was fully confirmed, and the hope for a German settlement seemed further away than ever. Secretary of State Marshall and British Foreign Secretary Bevin met privately several times at the end of the conference to decide what they would do next. Bevin wearily commented:

I am convinced that the Soviet Union will not deal with the West on any reasonable terms. . .and that. . .[its] salvation depends upon the formation of some form of union. . .backed by the United States.

Bevin felt that the Western democracies, including the United States, should organize themselves with power, money, and resolute action to resist communism. Bevin and French Foreign Minister Bidault had already started discussing the creation of a European alliance that could include the United States, but Bevin initially stressed to Marshall that he was not looking for a formal alliance so much as a way to create confidence among West Europeans that the Soviets would be stopped. Bevin urged a system, "a sort of spiritual federation of the West," that would include the United States and Italy as well as Britain and France. He outlined his thinking for Marshall by suggesting an alliance comprising two concentric circles, one composed of the nations that would later form the

Berlin schoolchildren watching a C-54 cargo plane approach Tempelhof Airport during the 1948 Berlin airlift.  
(AP/Wide World photo)

Brussels Pact and the other including the United States and Canada.<sup>7</sup>

A month later, in January 1948, Bevin followed up his informal presentation with a note to the State Department arguing that the Marshall Plan was not enough to save Europe and proposing, with the support of the United States and the Commonwealth, to form a Western democratic "system" that would include Scandinavia, the Low Countries, France, Italy, Greece, Portugal, and eventually Germany and Spain.<sup>8</sup>



## The Crises of 1948

East-West tensions escalated in the first half of 1948 as Czechoslovakia fell under communist rule, Italian elections approached, and in June Stalin instituted a blockade of the access routes to the city of Berlin. The situation in Germany created an acute case of war jitters. Since late 1946 the United States and Britain had been pursuing policies designed to encourage the rebuilding of the economic potential of their respective zones of occupation in Germany and simultaneously promote political democracy.

By early 1948, the growth of the West German economy led to major currency reform that was extended to the Western-occupied zones of Berlin in the heart of the still economically depressed Soviet zone of Germany. Western policies were hotly contested by the Soviet Union, which insisted that wartime and early postwar accords on German occupation required its consent to any major changes in treatment of the former enemy. U.S. and British officials brushed aside Soviet complaints as obstructionism designed to impede overall European recovery and leave a desperate West Germany prey to an eventual commu-



Norway: A new steel plant under construction by the Norwegian Government with Marshall Plan aid, just north of the Arctic Circle, at Mo i Rana. (Department of State photo)

nist takeover. In March the U.S. Military Governor, Gen. Lucius Clay, warned Washington that U.S.-Soviet tensions over Germany were rising to dangerous levels and that “war may come with dramatic suddenness.”

In June the Soviets cut off all ground transportation routes between West Germany and the Western zones of occupation in Berlin. Without supplies of food and fuels, the city seemed doomed to fall under Soviet control. The Berlin blockade brought the

United States and the Soviet Union to the brink of war. Truman dispatched B-29 bombers to the United Kingdom but prudently kept the atomic bombs they would carry at home. Under Secretary of State Robert Lovett visited Berlin and reported that Clay “was drawn. . . as tight as a steel spring.” Fortunately, a massive U.S. program of air supply kept Berlin supplied, Stalin made no threatening military moves, and the war hysteria gradually faded. The success of the audacious Berlin airlift raised morale throughout the West.<sup>9</sup>

## American Military Involvement in Western European Reconstruction and Security

During and after World War II, military power and security considerations assumed a far greater role in foreign policy calculations than American leaders had ever previously experienced. Although the United States quickly reduced the massive land, sea, and air forces

created to wage World War II, it nonetheless retained a significant capability and was until 1949 the sole state possessing a nuclear arsenal and delivery capability. American leaders were quick to recognize that U.S. military capability was essential in the postwar world, both to ensure national security at home and to protect essential national interests abroad. The Soviet challenge to global U.S. strategic and national security interests joined the more long-standing political and economic determinants of foreign policy and made a significant militarization of the American engagement in Europe inescapable.

The State Department, the traditional manager of U.S. foreign relations, had lost its unquestioned primacy during the Roosevelt administration. The President's clashes with and mistrust of the Foreign Service were legendary. During the war he limited the State Department's involvement in the decision-making process, dividing responsibility for U.S. foreign policy among a number of new agencies and vastly increasing the role of military leaders in policy decisions. Late in 1943 when the war was still being fought, President Roosevelt confirmed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) needed to be involved in postwar planning to ensure that military considerations were taken into account in political

and economic negotiations. He also determined that national security needs had to be reconciled with any international undertakings that the United States might assume.<sup>10</sup>

While the Department of State resumed a major role in policy planning after Roosevelt's death, the JCS and U.S. military leaders continued their involvement in policy planning and policymaking after the war. Civilian leaders relied on the military for advice on dealing with the rapidly expanding scope and severity of the Soviet threat. Postwar clashes over occupied Germany and Austria and Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe, and confrontations or near confrontations in Venezia Giulia, Czechoslovakia, Berlin, Iran, and Turkey strengthened the military's role. When policymaking and coordinating mechanisms carried over from the end of the war proved unequal to the United States' new role as the predominant

world power, Congress passed the National Security Act of 1947, creating a National Security Council (NSC) to harmonize foreign policymaking and to take into account the role of the new unified American military managed by the Department of Defense.<sup>11</sup>

### Isolationism, the UN Charter, and Postwar U.S. Foreign Policy

The Greek crisis of 1947 was the catalyst for active U.S. involvement in the European crisis. From the beginning, U.S. leaders recognized that the response they gave to Greece's problems had to be presented to the American people in the broadest possible context.

President Truman's March 12, 1947, speech to Congress, prepared by the State Department in consultation with the American military, outlined a specific

rationale for providing economic and military aid to Greece and Turkey. It also set the crisis in a larger context:

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressure. . . . It would be an unspeakable tragedy if these countries, which have struggled so long against overwhelming odds, should lose that victory for which they sacrificed so much. Collapse of free institutions and loss of independence would be disastrous not only for them but for the world. Discouragement and possibly failure would quickly be the lot of neighboring peoples striving to maintain their freedom and independence.

By calling for U.S. economic and military assistance for Greece and Turkey, the President had confronted European communism and committed

It is of vital importance that we act now, in order to preserve the conditions under which we can achieve lasting peace based on freedom and justice. The achievement of such a peace has been the great goal of this nation.

—President Truman  
Address to the Congress, March 17, 1948

the United States to a massive effort to support European democracies in which it would deploy its economic, political and military resources.<sup>12</sup>

Many Americans attached high hopes to the United Nations in the first years after the end of the war. The new international organization, located in New York and providing a vivid primer on the emerging new world order in which the United States held great promise and responsibility, seemed to offer a guarantee of lasting peace worthy of the great sacrifices of the war. For most Americans, the United Nations promised to be the embodiment of a powerful and humane internationalism that would overcome their long-held fears of dangerous foreign entanglements—fears that had engendered prewar isolationism.

President Roosevelt and

his advisers designed the United Nations and its Security Council mechanisms to respond to these public concerns about long-term international commitments that could lead to new conflict. And it was a vision embraced by Congress, the traditional stronghold of isolationism, which approved U.S. participation in the United Nations with little of the rancorous suspicion and opposition that marked Senate rejection of U.S. membership in the old League of Nations.

The State Department led the campaign to secure congressional approval of the UN Charter, and it envisaged a role for the United Nations in U.S. foreign policy. U.S. policymakers, however, did not believe that the United Nations could deal effectively with the major issues of the early Cold War, U.S. confrontations with the

dangers of communism, and the Soviet Union. As President Truman explained to Congress in his March 1947 address:

We have considered how the United Nations might assist in this [Greek-Turkish] crisis. But the situation is an urgent one requiring immediate action, and the United Nations and its related organizations are not in a position to extend help of the kind that is required.<sup>13</sup>

The address paid lip service to the UN Charter but, in effect, dismissed the new international body as unable on its own to resist violations of the status quo and the Charter by force and violence.

Much to the dismay of the Truman administration and Congress, the American public, while accepting the need to assist Greece and Turkey, reacted strongly

against bypassing the United Nations. The administration nevertheless continued to insist that the United Nations should be excluded from calculations about Greek policy. When Secretary of War Patterson and Secretary of the Navy Forrestal explored the possibility of a public acknowledgement of the role of the United Nations in the proposed provision of aid to Greece and Turkey, Acting Secretary of State Dean Acheson reiterated State's position "that we might as well face the fact that the UN will not settle problems of this type and that it is impossible for the UN to intervene in cases involving subversive movements."<sup>14</sup>

Acheson deleted a reference to the United Nations from the draft Greek-Turkish aid legislation forwarded by the State Department to Congress in March 1947. Senator Arthur Vandenberg, who had become a zealous advocate for an interventionist role for American foreign policy and favored assistance to Greece and Turkey, viewed the omission of a role for the United Nations as a "colossal blunder," and he made his support for the aid package conditional upon bringing the UN into the legislation. In



First session of the UN General Assembly, Flushing Meadows, Long Island, New York, 1946.

(Department of State photo)



place of the vanishing spirit of isolationism, the Senate now embraced the United Nations as the principal vehicle for discussing and resolving foreign policy issues. Despite State Department misgivings, in May 1947, a large bipartisan majority in the Senate passed the Greek-Turkish Assistance Act, which included a “Vandenberg amendment” calling for the United Nations to take over the Greek-Turkish assistance program from the United States should U.S. assistance no longer be necessary. Enabling legislation for the Truman program of aid to Greece and Turkey assigned the responsibility for the long-term reconstruction of Greece to the UN.<sup>15</sup> Senator Vandenberg would have more to say about the role of the United Nations in forging the postwar world order.

## The Western European Union and the Origin of the Atlantic Alliance

The internal unrest created by national communist parties and increased East-West tensions, as well as the immediate or direct military threat posed by the Soviet Union, were the driving force behind the decision to create a military security pact between the United

States and its West European allies. Also critical to European thinking, albeit unstated, was the belief that both the Marshall Plan and the nascent Western European Union were crucial steps toward linking Europe and the United States in a common defense pact. Only the United States possessed the finances and equipment necessary to support effective West European rearmament. Moreover, the overwhelming military power of the United States, at that point the sole state possessing nuclear weapons, was essential to the effective deterrence of both immediate internal and longer term external threats to Western Europe.

Another important concern were French fears about the effect on the European balance of power, and on France’s position in Europe, of the economic and political revitalization of Germany, which was essential to facilitate West

European recovery. West Europeans, whose main postwar goal continued to be the reconstruction of their economies, were convinced that economic rehabilitation could not occur without military security.

Between January and March 1948 Britain, France, and the Low Countries completed negotiations for a military alliance of West European countries and the establishment of the Western European Union. The Brussels Treaty, under which the allies promised to come to each other’s military assistance in case of attack, was signed on March 17.<sup>16</sup>

The United States encouraged European unity and self-defense measures and welcomed the Brussels Pact. President Truman went further in an address to Congress on March 17 when he acknowledged the historic nature of the Union and expressed confidence that

We must be ready to take every wise and necessary step to carry out this great purpose [securing the peace and preventing war]. This will require assistance to other nations. It will require an adequate and balanced military strength. We must be prepared to pay the price of peace or assuredly we shall pay the price of war.

—President Truman  
*Address to the Congress, March 17, 1948*

“the United States will, by appropriate means, extend to the free nations the support which the situation requires.” The President stressed the gravity and urgency of the situation when he went on to say:

There are times in world history when it is far wiser to act than to hesitate. There is some risk involved in action—there always is. But there is far more risk in failure to act.<sup>17</sup>

The President’s encouragement and call for action demonstrated a sympathy for the idea of collective defense, but a great deal of negotiation within the U.S. Government and with the European allies remained before an agreement ensuring collective action became a reality. Early initiative again came from Britain. In early March, even before the signing of the Brussels Treaty, Foreign Secretary Bevin asked the United States and Canada to

agree to immediate military staff discussions regarding collective security measures for the defense of the Atlantic and the Mediterranean areas. Secretary Marshall at once agreed.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the President's concerns about the necessity for quick action, some U.S. policymakers were hesitant to accept the British call for military staff conversations. The JCS was reluctant to move forward with such talks, fearing they would lead to a transfer to Europe of arms that American forces needed. George Kennan, chief of the State Department's Policy Plan-

Lovett took the lead in advocating negotiations for a defense pact. The Truman administration eventually reached a consensus to proceed with discussions, and the secret Pentagon Talks among U.S., British, and Canadian staffs were held in Washington from March 23 to April 1, 1948. At the final meeting, the U.S. representatives circulated the so-called "Pentagon Paper" outlining next steps the United States was prepared to take aimed at the conclusion of a "collective defense agreement for the North Atlantic Area" in accordance with Article 51 of the UN

commitment that an attack on one country would require a prompt, collective response by the entire alliance.<sup>20</sup>

While the Pentagon Talks had defined a future North Atlantic alliance, American policy had not yet coalesced in support of U.S. participation. A State Department policy paper of late March on the U.S. relationship to the Brussels Pact evolved into the interagency paper NSC 9 of April 13, "Position of the United States With Respect to Support for the Western Union and Other Related Free Countries." NSC 9 provided that the

European Union but the entire Atlantic area, including Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Portugal, Iceland, Ireland, and Canada. The basis for an eventual mutual defense treaty would be Article 51 of the UN Charter, which recognized the right of nations to self-defense. The United States would, in any case, have to provide Western Europe with military as well as economic assistance if it was to ward off communist expansion.<sup>21</sup>

U.S. military leaders continued to be reluctant to endorse undertakings originating in the State Department that would involve U.S. armed forces in major military commitments. They feared that U.S. military strength would be compromised at the expense of Europe which was not doing all that it could for self-defense and was probably not defensible against a determined Soviet attack in any case. President Truman and Secretary Marshall informed the National Security Council of Foreign Secretary Bevin's warning that the United States would have to be willing to assume certain obligations and should initiate Western negotiations for a security treaty. The JCS resisted a commitment to an undefined defense pact and recommended limiting U.S. participation in the proposed Brussels Pact military staff talks scheduled for July in London.<sup>22</sup>

The success of certain free nations in resisting aggression by the forces of Soviet directed world communism is of critical importance to the security of the United States. Some of these nations require not only economic assistance but also strengthened military capabilities if they are to continue and make more effective their political resistance to communist subversion from within and Soviet pressure from without and if they are to develop ultimately an increased military capability to withstand external armed attack.

—*National Security Council paper  
NSC 14/1, July 1, 1948*

ning Staff, argued against the militarization of an alliance before economic and political unification issues had been addressed. State Department European expert John D. Hickerson and Under Secretary Robert A.

Charter and applying the experience gained in drafting the Rio Treaty in 1947.<sup>19</sup>

While the composition of an alliance was not yet defined, the United States made clear the need for a

United States would support but not join the Brussels Pact. Instead the United States would explore a larger mutual defense undertaking—one that would include the United States—embracing not only the Western



State Department policymakers pressed on, nevertheless, with a revised paper that moved the alliance-making process forward. The new paper, NSC 9/2 of May 11, emphasized the need for Senate consultation on a possible alliance and included a draft resolution endorsing negotiations aimed at an Atlantic alliance. The paper called for exploratory diplomatic talks with interested European nations and military staff talks during the remainder of the year pending the outcome of the 1948 U.S. national elections. NSC 9/2 also asked the West European nations to do a better job of preparing their own defense efforts and advocated the standardization of their arms.<sup>23</sup>

## The Vandenberg Resolution: The UN Charter and the Future Alliance

**N**egotiations over the nature and degree of the U.S. commitment to the defense of its North Atlantic allies were complicated by the conflicting desire of the allies for an iron-clad assurance of immediate U.S. intervention in case of a Soviet attack and the insistence of the U.S. Senate that its constitutional prerogatives be preserved, especially the power to commit the United States to war. State Department officials, after assuming a common position of support for the idea of a



Republican Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, then-Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and President Pro Tempore of the Senate embraced the concept of a North Atlantic alliance, introducing what became known as the Vandenberg Resolution, which was passed on June 11, 1948.

(Department of State photo)

treaty, patiently wove together a text that balanced the concerns of its European allies, of the Senate, and of the U.S. military. Domestic U.S. politics, particularly those arising from the presidential election of 1948, played an important role in the international and congressional negotiations.

In keeping with practices worked out during the congressional debate over the Marshall Plan, discussions between administration and Republican leaders over

collective security arrangements in Europe were held between April and June 1948. The talks reflected the likelihood of a Republican presidential victory in the November elections. Republican Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and President Pro Tempore of the Senate, was a leading contender for the GOP presidential nomination before dropping out of the contest. In friendly and candid talks with Secretary of State Marshall and Under Secretary Lovett, Vandenberg embraced the concept of a North Atlantic alliance and agreed to support it in the Senate, but only if substantive negotiations were delayed until after the elections and the UN Charter were more clearly affirmed and invoked in the prospective treaty.<sup>24</sup>

The role of personal relations in foreign policy was demonstrated by Lovett's informal discussions with Vandenberg. The Senator, now a convinced internationalist, wanted to be helpful but was mindful of political realities, which he sought to impress on the Under Secretary and the Truman administration. In an April 11 meeting, Lovett tactfully probed Vandenberg's thinking on a number of key issues, including the type of aid Congress would approve; the form of a pact, particularly the willingness of the Senate to approve a slightly modified version of the Rio Treaty with regard to

Europe; the role of the United Nations in collective security arrangements; and the legislative preparation needed for eventual conclusion of a long-term European security agreement. A week later Vandenberg and Lovett discussed the wording of a resolution that would provide the legislative groundwork for a long-term pact.<sup>25</sup>

On May 11 Vandenberg presented a resolution that he had drafted with Lovett to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which approved it. On June 11 Vandenberg introduced and the Senate passed by a vote of 64 to 6 a resolution advising the President to seek U.S. and free world security through support of mutual defense arrangements that operated within the UN Charter but outside the Security Council, where the Soviet veto would thwart collective defense arrangements. Paragraph three of the resolution referred to issues of military assistance or alliance, encouraging "association by the United States, by constitutional process, with such regional and other collective arrangements as are based on continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, and as effects its national security."<sup>26</sup>

The Vandenberg Resolution was the landmark action that opened the way to the negotiation of the North Atlantic Treaty. While it is clear that the concept of such an alliance first arose

during the Pentagon Talks in Washington in March, American action would have been stymied without the Senate action endorsing an internationalist role for the United States.

## The Department of State Debate Over the Atlantic Alliance

Passage of the Vandenberg Resolution was a victory for those State Department policymakers who worked through the winter and spring of 1948 to advance the idea of an Atlantic alliance. Secretary of State Marshall's leadership can scarcely be underestimated. By the end of 1947 he was manifestly disillusioned with the possibility of negotiating a European peace settlement with the Soviets, and he recognized the threat to the security of Western Europe without such a settlement. Foreign Secretary Bevin's discussions with Marshall after the London Council of Foreign Ministers meeting

interested the Secretary in the concept of an Atlantic area security undertaking.

By March 1948 Marshall had explained to President Truman the dangerous situation in Europe and obtained his approval to go forward with contacts with the Western European Union about some sort of collective defense arrangement. Secretary Marshall turned to senior Department European experts John D. Hickerson and Theodore C. Achilles to guide the exploratory contacts with the British and other Europeans regarding such an undertaking in the early months of 1948. Hickerson and Achilles became strong proponents of a North Atlantic alliance.

After agreement had emerged at the Pentagon Talks in March-April 1948 on an Atlantic alliance and the need to gain congressional support became essential, Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson, who had worked shoulder to shoulder with Secretary Marshall on the launching of the Marshall Plan for

economic aid to Europe, left the State Department in mid-1948. Robert Lovett, who formally took over as Under Secretary of State in July 1948 but started preparing for the position in May, quickly became the Department's principal alliance negotiator and spokesman. Secretary Marshall weighed in at critical junctures, but he was preoccupied with the many foreign affairs crises of 1948 and away from the Department for long periods, traveling to South America or attending UN sessions in Paris concerned with resolving the Berlin situation. Under Secretary Lovett, who directed the diplomatic negotiations throughout the remainder of 1948 leading to the NATO treaty, from the start regarded such an alliance as the essential military complement of the Marshall Plan.<sup>27</sup>

Within the Department of State's Bureau of European Affairs there was from the start an undercurrent of support for the alliance idea as well as a feeling of

urgency. The State Department did not, however, speak with a single voice. George Kennan, chief of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, was an early opponent of a military solution to the Soviet threat to Europe and the creation of an alliance with Western Europe on the grounds that it would harden the division of Europe into opposing blocs. Only economic competition would succeed. Rather than arming Europe, he felt that both Soviet and allied troops would have to be withdrawn from Germany and Austria. Kennan later remarked on the irony, considering his views, of his assignment by Lovett to serve on the working group of Brussels Pact diplomats who developed the actual language for a treaty.<sup>28</sup>

Chief Soviet expert and Counselor of the Department of State Charles Bohlen, although not directly involved in the alliance planning and negotiation during 1948, was at first opposed because of the presumed likely reactions of the Soviet Union. Bohlen was also concerned about the utility of alliances in general. Bohlen feared overreacting to the Soviet threat in Europe and joined Kennan in an April 1948 memorandum opposing the alliance on the grounds that it was premature and might well cause problems of its own in the West.<sup>29</sup>

In July 1948 Bohlen wrote of his continued

There are times in world history when it is far wiser to act than to hesitate. There is some risk involved in action—there always is. But there is far more risk in failure to act. For if we act wisely now, we shall strengthen the powerful forces for freedom, justice, and peace which are represented by the United Nations and the free nations of the world.

—President Truman

*Address to the Congress, March 17, 1948*

opposition until there was better coordination with the Europeans and until it could be better determined what the Soviet reaction to such an alliance would be. While not denying a Soviet threat, Bohlen, along with Kennan, denied that the Soviet Union was bent upon world domination, and they argued that the West was stronger vis-à-vis the Soviet Union than at any time since the end of the war. Bohlen argued that the period from 1945 to 1947 had been the time of greatest danger for the United States and the West with their armed forces demobilizing and the American public not yet alerted to the Soviet threat.

But the Soviet army had not moved. Through 1948 the Soviet Union had not moved beyond the Iron Curtain. An Atlantic alliance at this time might provoke a dangerous Soviet response and do more harm than good. Europe needed to be economically strong to best resist communism. Bohlen wanted the West to avoid overreacting and unnecessarily provoking the Soviet Union. When in November 1948 Secretary of Defense Forrestal asked if the Soviet threat had expanded so seriously during 1948 that it justified deployment of a larger U.S. military force, Bohlen responded, with Marshall's concurrence, that little had changed since the spring of 1948.<sup>30</sup>

## Moving Toward Military Assistance to Europe and Coordinated Military Planning

The basic concept of an Atlantic alliance against communist aggression that emerged from the secret Pentagon Talks in Washington in the spring of 1948 envisaged both the provision of U.S. military equipment and supplies to West European armed forces and U.S. involvement in a coordinated defense against an attack on any of the West European partners. Despite the Brussels Pact military staff talks that were held in London in August, which included U.S. officers as observers, the United States and Europe remained far apart in forging a common military stance against the communist bloc throughout the remainder of 1948. The Europeans looked for the immediate delivery of U.S. arms and supplies to the armies of the individual partners, but the United States insisted that military assistance be contingent on Europe coordinating and essentially unifying its armed defenses against the Soviet Union.

While diplomatic exploratory talks began in Washington in July 1948 on the nature and scope of the Atlantic alliance, American leaders waited in vain for the development among the Brussels Pact nations of any coordination of military

plans or any other steps toward unifying defenses such as standardization of weapons.<sup>31</sup>

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had not been enthusiastic supporters in the spring of 1948 of military assistance to West European countries or of any sort of strategic commitment to those countries. The JCS were greatly concerned that military assistance to Europe would be achieved at the expense of arms and equipment desperately needed for the buildup of U.S. armed forces to meet their expanding postwar missions and obligations. The deep concerns of the U.S. military leaders were partially allayed by a policy approved by the President in early July 1948 regarding the provision of military assistance to Europe. NSC 14/1 called for the enactment of legislation to permit military assistance to selected non-communist nations in Europe. Any grant of military aid should not jeopardize U.S. military requirements, and recipient countries were expected to provide as much self-help and mutual assistance as possible, integrate their arms industries, and standardize their weapons on American types.<sup>32</sup>

Nor did the JCS look with favor on alliance plans that would deprive U.S. forces of the flexibility to meet global demands with the dwindling appropriations

for arms that marked the first few postwar years. Moreover, Plan Half Moon—the JCS plan for responding to a major Soviet military attack in Europe, which was approved in May 1948 and guided U.S. military planning through 1948—assumed an American evacuation of Europe, strategic defense of Britain and Suez, and eventual liberation of Europe later.<sup>33</sup>

France presented a special problem to U.S. advocates of an Atlantic alliance. In the summer of 1948, France made manifestly clear that it would not rely for its own security on U.S. troops and that it needed to be rearmed and re-equipped first before concerning itself with coordinated long-range European defensive planning against a Soviet attack. For a time U.S. negotiators put off these French requests with explanations about the lack of available arms to give France and the need for legislation before any such assistance could be rendered. In September, however, Under Secretary Lovett informed French diplomatic representatives that the United States would try to meet, at President Truman's direction, the most urgent French requests by transferring from U.S. stocks in Germany equipment for three French divisions.<sup>34</sup>



## The Washington Exploratory Talks, July-September 1948, and the Debate Over the Scope of the Alliance

On June 28, 1948, the National Security Council, in directive NSC 9/3, authorized the U.S. Government to seek means, within the terms of the Vandenberg Resolution, to provide support to the free states of Western Europe.<sup>35</sup> The nations of the Western European Union were advised that the President was prepared to authorize U.S. participation in talks with European representatives to draw up military plans for use in event of a Soviet attack and to coordinate military supply. Discussions led to the convening of the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security on July 6 attended by representatives of the United States, Britain, Canada, France, and the Benelux states. The talks continued through September 10. By July 9 when the talks moved to the key question of U.S. association with the European states, the Europeans broached the idea of a “North Atlantic Pact” to include U.S. membership.

During the talks, which were held at the State Department, U.S. and West European diplomats negotiated the basic scope and structure of the North

Atlantic alliance. Secretary of State Marshall decided that the talks were not for the purpose of making final decisions, and no special military representatives or officials from other Foreign Ministries were to attend. State Department officials headed by Under Secretary of State Lovett met in 10 formal sessions and other private meetings with the Ambassadors and other diplomats of Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Canada. The negotiators considered two main issues: the scope of the alliance and the form it would take. U.S. negotiators were careful, however, not to exceed their essentially limited mandate under the Vandenberg Resolution, and they kept the alliance negotiations essentially tentative, foreseeing that the real negotiations would take place after the November national elections and inauguration of a new President. The Exploratory Talks did succeed, nevertheless, in bringing the Brussels Pact nations and the United States much closer to an alliance.<sup>36</sup>

The major debate in the Washington Exploratory Talks arose as the Brussels Pact representatives strongly resisted the State Department determination to broaden any alliance to include not just the Brussels Pact members but all nations bordering the Atlantic that could have an important role in the successful defense of

Western Europe against a Soviet attack. The United States argued for the inclusion in any alliance of Norway, Denmark (especially Greenland), Iceland, Ireland, and Portugal (especially the Azores). Those islands bridging the Atlantic made U.S. involvement in an effective alliance workable. Sweden also was considered by U.S. officials as a potential alliance member.

The Brussels Pact nations preferred that a prospective alliance be limited to the United States and the Pact. There was clear anxiety among the Pact nations that an expanded alliance would greatly reduce the amount of U.S. military assistance and equipment that alliance members would receive. European diplomats tried to cling to the Brussels group as the inner core of any alliance but eventually conceded and went to their governments with the proposal for a wider group of associated nations. George Kennan was sympathetic to the European preference for a two-pillared alliance of the United States and the Brussels Pact, but Lovett and his aides such as John Hickerson pressed for the expanded alliance that was eventually achieved.

The U.S. negotiators and the Brussels Pact diplomats also wrestled over the essential clause in any alliance undertaking: the basis on which members were obliged to come to each other’s aid and defense.

On August 9 during the ninth working group meeting, State Department Counselor Charles Bohlen indicated that U.S. involvement would be conditioned by the terms of the UN Charter and “must recognize the separation of powers within the U.S. Government.” At its next meeting (August 12) the working group began studying the Rio Treaty as a model for a North Atlantic treaty.<sup>37</sup>

Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty emerged from discussions regarding the nature of the U.S. obligation to come to Europe’s assistance in case of attack. The Europeans argued for the formulation already included in Article IV of the Brussels Treaty under which the allies would “afford the party attacked all the military and other aid and assistance in their power.” State Department representatives insisted that the United States could not constitutionally enter any alliance that would require it to go to war automatically. They offered the wording of the Rio Treaty—already approved by Congress—as the best alternative. Article 3 of the Rio Treaty stated that an attack against one party would be regarded as an attack against all, but Article 4 provided for “individual determinations by each party, pending agreement upon collective measures, of the immediate measures which it will individually take

in fulfillment of the obligation.” U.S. and European negotiators agreed to blend the provisions of the Brussels and Rio Treaties.

The agreed compromise language made the responses by the individual alliance members to cases of attack conditional on their “constitutional processes.” Looking back a quarter century later, Dean Acheson recalled that negotiations for the North Atlantic Treaty “became a contest between our allies seeking to impale the Senate on the specific, and the senators attempting to wriggle free.”<sup>38</sup>

On September 9 the participants submitted a memorandum to their governments that outlined the text of an alliance treaty.<sup>39</sup> The alliance negotiations went into a 3-month recess to avoid involvement in the November 1948 U.S. elections. By keeping the creation of a Western alliance out of the campaign, European and American diplomats believed that the anticipated Republican victory would have little impact on the final agreement when talks resumed.

### Drafting the North Atlantic Treaty, October–December 1948

By September 1948 U.S. and Brussels Pact diplomats had made substantial progress in formulating the basic elements of an alliance, but

The establishment of the OEEC and the signature of the Brussels Treaty. . . indicate the intent of the peaceloving countries of Europe to work together in their common interest, and additional steps designed to bring about a substantial and permanent degree of cooperation and unity among these countries would materially improve the present position. . . . Those nations having a primary interest in the security of the North Atlantic area should collaborate in the development of a regional or collective defence arrangement for that area. . . .

—Washington Paper,  
summarizing the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security,  
July 6–September 10, 1948

no further progress on the treaty was possible until after several essential events in the last months of the year: the U.S. national elections, review and appraisal by the U.S. and the Brussels Pact governments of the results of the Washington Exploratory Talks, an approach to the other possible members of an expanded Atlantic alliance, preparation of an actual draft treaty, and additional progress in unifying the West European military planning and command.

The November 2 national elections in the United States not only resulted in President Truman’s re-election but the return of a Democratic majority in Congress. The outcome worked in favor of the ongoing efforts to conclude an Atlantic alliance. The President had campaigned on a platform of

bipartisan foreign policy, and the Republican leadership in the Senate continued to support the negotiations begun in Washington. President Truman approved on November 6 the Washington conference paper of September 9, setting the stage for accelerated treaty negotiations.

During October and November the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department prepared status reports for the NSC on the military and diplomatic aspects of the negotiations. The October 19 JCS report indicated that the U.S. military was satisfied with the course of the military talks but cautioned that much time and effort would be needed to provide Western Europe with its minimum defense requirements. The State Department for its part stressed

that the alliance was more a political weapon than a military one. Under Secretary Lovett explained to the NSC on December 2 that the military value of the alliance was secondary to its political symbolism of Western unity. The alliance would be mainly a consultative body. It could make recommendations, but only Congress could declare war for the United States. Moreover, specific commitments and obligations could only be undertaken within the constitutional processes of each member state, and the United States would remain free, as would every other member state, to take whatever measures it deemed fitting to halt Soviet aggression.<sup>40</sup>

By the end of October, the Brussels Pact nations had also accepted the September 9 paper and had approached

the Danish, Icelandic, Norwegian, Portuguese, Irish, and Swedish Governments about association with the alliance. All but Ireland agreed to join in the treaty-making process. Under Secretary Lovett and the U.S. negotiating team also pressed on the Brussels Pact representatives the importance of including Italy and possibly other nations not actually bordering on the Atlantic. Emphasizing the strategic importance of Italy and its ongoing struggle against communist subversion and takeover, the U.S. negotiators sought agreement on a formula under which the alliance could be expanded to include Italy and other countries in the future. Secretary Marshall, who spent much of September and October at the UN General Assembly session in Paris, closely monitored the alliance progress and personally interviewed the Norwegian and Swedish Foreign Ministers about participation. The Swedish efforts to organize a neutral Nordic Pact posed serious problems for Norway. Marshall questioned Sweden's claim to a tradition of neutrality. Sweden was not invited to join in the negotiations for an alliance.<sup>41</sup>

While State Department officials were meeting with Brussels Pact diplomats in Washington during the summer, U.S. military planners held a series of discussions with Pact military leaders regarding alliance planning and the

leadership of the prospective alliance. Agreement was reached to defend Western Europe at the Rhine, and various command possibilities were weighed until it was decided in early October that British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery would become commander in chief of Western European Union forces. Secretary Marshall, who opposed earlier suggestions that such a commander be an American, recommended and President Truman accepted the designation of Montgomery.<sup>42</sup>

Under Secretary Lovett and the representatives of the Brussels Pact powers resumed their discussions of the alliance in early December even as an ambassadorial working group began drafting an actual text of a treaty. By December 24 the draft treaty was forwarded to the governments for review. The draft obliged the signatories to consider an attack against any of them as an attack against all and to take whatever action was necessary to assure security of the North Atlantic. The parties also were to consult with one another on perceived threats to the territory, security, or political independence of each other; strengthen their capacity to resist aggression; and create a council to facilitate the implementation of the treaty. The working group was unable to agree on inclusion of French North Africa in the treaty and whether to invite Italy to become a

member. Two definitions of the North Atlantic area were included in the December 24 draft: one would include northwestern Africa and the western Mediterranean in the alliance area, and both definitions specified the Tropic of Cancer as the southern limit of the alliance.<sup>43</sup>

Even as the negotiators struggled to agree on the substance of the treaty, Canada sought to include economic and social unity in language proposed for Article 2. The Canadian representative argued that there was need for ideological unity among the North Atlantic powers. Secretary Acheson opposed strong language proposed by Canada and warned of the danger of alienating the U.S. Senate. Eventually Canadian Prime Minister St. Laurent gained support directly from President Truman for a compromise Article 2 that

encouraged economic collaboration among the member states.<sup>44</sup>

On January 5, 1949, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a memorandum to Secretary of Defense James Forrestal, reaffirmed their approval of the idea of collective defense with the proviso that the treaty offer only a "broad general basis" for implementation of military matters. On January 20 Truman, in his inaugural address, publicly outlined administration policy to "make it sufficiently clear, in advance, that any armed attack affecting our national security would be met with overwhelming force," and announced that he would send to the Senate a Treaty respecting the North Atlantic Security plan. In addition, we will provide military advice and equipment to free nations which will cooperate with us in the maintenance of peace and security.<sup>45</sup>

Too often peace has been thought of as a negative condition—the mere absence of war. We know now that we cannot achieve peace by taking a negative attitude. Peace is positive, and it has to be waged with all our thought, energy and courage, and with the conviction that war is not inevitable.

—Secretary Acheson  
Address to the nation, March 18, 1949



We sincerely hope we can avoid strife, but we cannot avoid striving for what is right. We devoutly hope we can have genuine peace, but we cannot be complacent about the present uneasy and troubled peace. A secure and stable peace is not a goal we can reach all at once and for all time. It is a dynamic state, produced by effort and faith, with justice and courage. The struggle is continuous and hard. The prize is never irrevocably ours. To have this genuine peace we must constantly work for it. But we must do even more. We must make it clear that armed attack will be met by collective defense, prompt and effective. That is the meaning of the North Atlantic pact.

—Secretary Acheson

*Address to the nation, March 18, 1949*



Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, January 1949–January 1953.

(Department of State photo)

## Consultations With Congress, January–March 1949

The Brussels Pact and Canadian Governments approved the outcome of the Washington Exploratory Talks and the September 9 paper during the autumn of 1948. Formal U.S. approval required consultations with Congress, which were delayed until the newly elected Congress convened. Secretary of State Marshall and Under Secretary Lovett, who had maintained such close contact with key Senators during 1948, were unable to see the alliance negotiations through to their conclusion. Secretary Marshall was hospitalized at the end of

November 1948 and resigned in December, and Under Secretary Lovett insisted on leaving government service along with Marshall.<sup>46</sup>

The President chose Dean Acheson as Marshall's successor, and Acheson was sworn in on January 21, after bruising hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that focused on the mounting accusations of communist subversion in the State Department and the indictment of Alger Hiss on charges of espionage. Nonpartisan collaboration between the State Department under Secretary Acheson and the Senate never gained the intimacy reached earlier by Marshall, Lovett, and Vandenberg.

Secretary Acheson personally directed all of the diplomatic negotiations regarding the alliance from February until the treaty was signed and ratified. State Department experts John Hickerson, Theodore Achilles, and Dean Rusk continued their important roles as well. President Truman was kept closely informed on the progress of the difficult negotiations with the allied Ambassadors and with Congress, and he weighed in when necessary to keep moving toward conclusion of the treaty. During the final drafting of the treaty these consultations were most intense, and Secretary Acheson moved back and forth between the domestic and

foreign consultations. He met a half-dozen times in February and early March with Senator Vandenberg and with the new Democratic Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Tom Connally, and once with a delegation from the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. From February through the middle of March, Acheson met with the Brussels Pact, Canadian, and eventually Norwegian Ambassadors for nine more sessions of the Washington Exploratory Talks.<sup>47</sup>

During this February–March 1949 period of consultation regarding the emerging draft of the treaty, considerable attention was given to the admission of



President Harry Truman addresses the Washington Summit prior to the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty on April 4, 1949. Seated are the foreign ministers of the 12 signatory nations. In the front row (left to right): Ernest L. Bevin, United Kingdom; Halvard Lange, Norway; Joseph Bech, Luxembourg; Bjarni Benediktsson, Iceland; Gustav Rasmussen, Denmark; Paul-Henri Spaak, Belgium; Dean Acheson, United States; Lester B. Pearson, Canada; Robert Schuman, France; Count Carlo Sforza, Italy; Dirk U. Stikker, Netherlands; and Jose Caeiro de Mata, Portugal.

(Department of State photo)

additional members beyond the original Brussels Pact group, Canada, and the United States. Norway joined the Washington Exploratory Talks in late February, and agreement was finally reached by early March on the admission of Iceland, Denmark, Italy, and Portugal. Senators also strongly opposed Article 2 in the early draft treaty and its prescription for cultural, social, and economic cooperation, and Secretary Acheson had to obtain modification from the Ambassadors before the Senate was willing to accept the treaty.

But the most difficult issue in these early spring consultations was the

formulation in Article 5 of the December 24 draft of the automatic involvement of the United States and other members in case of a conflict. Neither Senator Connally nor Senator Vandenberg found the original version of Article 5 acceptable. More than a month was needed before Secretary Acheson and his team were able to reconcile both the Senate leadership and the Brussels Pact diplomats with a compromise Article 5 and an understanding of the automaticity of commitments under the treaty. Secretary Acheson reported at several February meetings of the Washington Exploratory Talks on his consultations with the Senate and the unacceptability of Article 5 in the December 24 treaty

draft. He warned that the Senators feared that the United States “was rushing into some kind of automatic commitment.” He suggested that the phrase “military or other action” in Article 5 was “an unnecessary embellishment.” The Secretary stressed not only the need to bring along the Congress but also the limits of congressional understanding of the seven nations’ undertaking.

During a February 8 meeting with Norwegian Foreign Minister Halvard Lange, Bohlen reflected continuing concern about the wording of Article 5. He told Lange that the alliance had to leave a potential aggressor with no doubts about “what he would run into if he started something” and provide a “sense of security” to European states that would permit economic and political recovery. While the representatives of the Benelux states, France, Britain, and Canada expressed strong reservations regarding any watering down of the wording of Article 5, particularly anything that might undercut the suggestion of swift reaction to aggression, they agreed to make small changes in the wording to meet the Senators’ concerns.<sup>48</sup>

Initially Secretary Acheson’s consultations with key Senators had been private, as were his parallel meetings with North Atlantic ambassadors. Public Senate

debate over the draft treaty, and particularly Article 5, unexpectedly and prematurely erupted, however, in mid-February when the *Kansas City Times* printed a story about a February 7 meeting between Acheson and Lange, during which Acheson may have reflected some ambivalence of his own. The *Times* reported that the Secretary of State had concealed Senate Foreign Relations Committee concerns about the wording of Article 5 from the European ambassadors and had told Lange that although only Congress could declare war, the United States would assume a moral commitment to act against an attack on the alliance.<sup>49</sup>

During the February 14 Senate debate, Senator Connally joined the “irreconcilables,” such as Senator Forrest Donnell, in disclaiming any moral or legal commitment to go to war for Europe. “I do not believe in giving carte blanche assurances,” proclaimed Connally, suggesting that the European negotiators had cleverly hoodwinked the State Department. After the debate, Vandenberg and Connally met with Acheson to lay out the concrete changes to the draft Article 5 needed to secure passage. Vandenberg told Acheson that action under the article “should be a matter of individual determination” and that the word “military”

should be removed. Connally recommended that the phrase “as it may deem necessary” be inserted in order to emphasize that a “military” response would not always be necessary.<sup>50</sup>

Most European representatives regarded the Senate outburst as a dire threat to the draft treaty, claiming that any watering down of Article 5’s wording would diminish the alliance’s value. British Foreign Secretary Bevin, although dismayed by the proposed changes, was willing to go even further to accommodate the Senate and ensure approval of the treaty. Bevin concluded that in the long run the wording of Article 5 would not matter. The United States would be

drawn into repelling any attack on the alliance, no matter what technical responsibility the Senate had for declaring war.<sup>51</sup>

Following up on Secretary Acheson’s efforts to find some compromise language for Article 5 that would satisfy Senators Vandenberg and Connally, Bohlen drew up four alternate drafts of the article hoping to find at least one version that would meet the desires of both the allies and the Senators. These several drafts differed essentially in the language describing the action to be taken by member states in case of attack on an alliance member: providing for military action, some other less

defined “action,” or some still less definite “measures.”<sup>52</sup>

Acheson presented these drafts to President Truman who threw his personal weight behind the effort. The President intervened with Senator Connally and urged his full support for Acheson in the Article 5 matter. By the end of February, after still more meetings with leading Senators and with the ambassadors, Secretary Acheson’s efforts led to a compromise that reconciled Senate concern about holding on to constitutional powers to declare war and commit the United States and the Allies’ desire for automatic involvement.

For us, war is not inevitable. We do not believe that there are blind tides of history which sweep men one way or the other. In our own time we have seen brave men overcome obstacles that seemed insurmountable and forces that seemed overwhelming. Men with courage and vision can still determine their own destiny. They can choose slavery or freedom —war or peace. I have no doubt which they will choose. The treaty we are signing here today is evidence of the path they will follow. If there’s anything inevitable in the future, it is the will of the people of the world from freedom and peace.

—President Truman  
*Remarks at the signing ceremony, April 4, 1949*





Surrounded by congressional leaders, President Truman ratifies the North Atlantic Pact at the White House, July 25, 1949.

(Bettmann Newsphotos)

Agreement was finally reached on the complete text of a treaty that satisfied the principal Senators and the ambassadors who reflected the views of their governments. The agreed Article 5 included the minimal definition of automaticity by committing each of the member states to “take such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.”

Secretary Acheson moved the treaty process forward as rapidly as possible, appearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 8, where he reported publicly on the progress of treaty negotiations with the

prospective alliance members at the Washington Exploratory Talks and on the text of the draft treaty that the ambassadors had approved. The committee followed the lead of Senators Connally and Vandenberg and quickly approved the draft, making only minor language changes that confirmed the constitutional prerogatives of the Senate. Senator Vandenberg repeatedly cautioned the Secretary that the tighter the commitment to automatic involvement, the less likely the chance of rounding up the two-thirds majority vote needed to ratify the treaty in the full Senate.<sup>53</sup>

The Truman administration issued statements that made reference to language in the Rio Treaty (attack on one is an attack on all) and in Article 51 of the UN Charter (allies jointly and severally taking measures to restore peace and security) as precedents for U.S. involvement in a multilateral defense arrangement.<sup>54</sup>

To meet the specific objections raised by the Senators, the concepts in these statements were applied to Europe through reference to the Vandenberg Resolution. Further clarifying language was placed in the first sentence of Article 11 (“The treaty shall be ratified and its provisions carried out by the Parties in accordance with their respective constitutional processes.”). This permitted Senators to claim that their powers over issues of peace and war had been respected while the language of Article 5 provided reassurance to the allies of speedy U.S. response in case of aggression.<sup>55</sup>

## Scope and Membership of the Alliance

The founding membership of the North Atlantic Alliance was not decided until March 1949. Norway, which was withstanding a press and diplomatic campaign of threats from the Soviet Union for considering aligning itself with the North Atlantic powers, was invited to join in early March, followed soon after by Denmark and Iceland. U.S. and Brussels Pact military opinion was against the inclusion of Italy in the alliance because of the probable drain on resources and the thought that Italy would be unable to contribute to the defense of the West. On the other hand,

political opinion strongly endorsed Italy’s inclusion in order to stiffen Italian resistance to communist subversion.<sup>56</sup>

Portugal also took up the invitation to join the alliance although reluctantly, noting the danger to its alliance with Spain but recognizing the strong sentiment in Western Europe against any alignment with Franco-ruled Spain. Among the negotiators, the sharpest argument regarding membership arose over the decision to extend the territory covered by the alliance to include Algeria. By March 17 the negotiators issued invitations to Italy, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Portugal to be original signatories of the treaty.<sup>57</sup>

Strong representations from disappointed Governments of Turkey and Greece pointed out that the admission of Italy was a significant departure from the Atlantic concept of the alliance. It was not until 1951 that these countries became members of the alliance in their own right.<sup>58</sup>

## Signing and Ratification

On March 8 Acheson reported to the President that he had won the approval of the Senate leadership, with extremely minimal wording changes, for the December 24 draft treaty produced by the Ambassadorial Working Group. The language of Article 5 very

closely follows that of draft A of Bohlen's February 16 memorandum.<sup>59</sup>

The allies offered no serious disagreements with the wording agreed on by Acheson and the Senators. The 18th meeting of the Exploratory Talks, March 15, conducted a general review of the draft treaty, during which the members briefly discussed the relationship of Article 5's wording to the UN Charter, made small corrections to the text of the document, and approved it, subject to French concordance. No interpretations were attached to either Articles 5 or 11.<sup>60</sup>

Foreign Ministers of the 12 founding member states of NATO—Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, and the United States—began to assemble in Washington in late March 1949. Secretary of State Acheson commenced a series of informal discussions with individual Foreign Ministers at the Department of State on March 31. On April 2 the Secretary chaired a formal conference of the 12 Foreign Ministers (accompanied by senior Foreign Ministry officials and resident ambassadors) at the Department of State. The first order of business at this 2-hour meeting was approval, by acclamation, of the text of the treaty. The ministers then held a preliminary discussion on the procedures to establish the North Atlantic Council, the

Defense Committee, and other subsidiary bodies to implement the treaty.

The signing ceremony took place on the afternoon of April 4 in the Departmental Auditorium on Constitution Avenue before an audience of some 1,500 diplomats, Cabinet officers, Members of Congress, and other dignitaries. The meeting, which was broadcast live over a national television and radio hookup, began at approximately 2:45 p.m. Secretary Acheson made some welcoming remarks, and the 11 other Foreign Ministers then each made a 5-minute statement. President Truman arrived at 4:25 p.m., made his formal remarks, and then presided over the formal signing by the Foreign Ministers. Out of deference to Secretary Acheson, the President left to him the honor of signing for the United States.<sup>61</sup>

In his address, Truman tied the objectives of the new treaty to those enshrined in the U.S. Declaration of Independence. The treaty "would create a shield against aggression and fear of aggression—a bulwark which will permit us to get on with the real business of government and society, the business of achieving a fuller and happier life for all our citizens."

The meeting ended shortly before 5 p.m. after concluding remarks by Acheson. Later that evening President Truman hosted a

dinner for the Foreign Ministers in honor of the occasion.<sup>62</sup>

Soviet efforts to deter the conclusion of the Atlantic alliance included clumsy attempts at diplomatic intimidation of Norway and threats to suspend the wartime treaties with Britain and France. The main Soviet effort was made in the UN General Assembly when it convened in New York in April 1949 soon after the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty. Foreign Minister Gromyko's attempt to characterize the treaty as an attack on the UN Charter failed to elicit any support in the United Nations.<sup>63</sup> Opposition to the North Atlantic pact was strongest in France and Italy, states that not coincidentally had the largest communist parties in the West. In addition to heated rhetorical exchanges, fights broke out in the Italian chamber, and parties of the left organized mass anti-treaty demonstrations. Parliament in both states, however, ratified the document with strong majorities.

The ratification process was completed by August 24, but not without further difficult negotiations and discussions. The Governments of Britain and the other Brussels Pact nations, which postponed ratification action until the U.S. Senate had acted, were particularly concerned that a treaty had been concluded but the United States had not yet done anything about providing actual arms and military

equipment. Foreign Minister Bevin steered the ratification process forward on the basis of assurances from Secretary Acheson that legislation would be introduced into Congress as soon as ratification was completed.<sup>64</sup>

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee held 16 days of hearings on the treaty with most of the discussion centered on Article 5 and the automaticity of the obligation of member states to come to the aid of treaty members in case of attack and the relationship to the UN Charter. Senator Vandenberg and others were concerned with Congress' constitutional prerogatives, and the hearings made a clear record of Secretary Acheson's assurances on behalf of the Truman administration that the treaty would operate within the parameters of Article 51 of the UN Charter. In its June 6 report to the Senate recommending ratification, the Foreign Relations Committee made the strongest possible case for preserving congressional prerogatives.<sup>65</sup>

The Senators also worried about several other matters not so thoroughly aired with the West European ambassadors in the 1948 and 1949 talks. Secretary Acheson was able to meet the concerns of Senators regarding the process for the accession of new members to the treaty by obtaining President

Truman's commitment that the accession of any new member nations would require the advice and consent of the Senate. The Secretary was later to greatly regret another assurance he gave to the Senate, in response to concerns that Article 3 would mean providing substantial numbers of U.S. troops to Europe in support of NATO, that there was absolutely no such expectation of the assignment of U.S. troops.<sup>66</sup>

The Senate, after 10 days of debate, agreed with the Foreign Relations Committee and approved the treaty on July 21 by a vote of 82 to 13. The President ratified the treaty on July 25; it entered into force August 24, 1949, after the other signatory nations quickly ratified. The first meeting of the North Atlantic Council was convened by Secretary Acheson in Washington on September 17.

## Military Assistance to NATO

Even before ratification was completed, the issue of U.S. military assistance for the NATO countries had become a major matter of concern and even conflict within the U.S. Government and with the other NATO allies. In the summer of 1948, Gen. Lyman Lemnitzer had headed

a delegation of U.S. military officers charged with exploring with Brussels Pact military leaders their essential military assistance requirements. These early soundings were carried out within the terms of official U.S. policy (NSC 14/1) that favored providing military assistance to non-communist nations.

An August 1948 report by the State-Army-Navy-Air Force Coordinating Committee listed 59 nations qualified for aid and assigned the Brussels Pact the highest authority. The U.S. military establishment continued to be concerned that such assistance would deplete the equipment available for the U.S. armed forces, and the argument grew for foreign military assistance to be a separate congressional appropriation. This position was endorsed by Averell Harriman, the European Recovery Program representative in Europe, who argued that the provision of military assistance to West European nations in order to promote economic recovery was stalled by the unsupportable defense budgets.<sup>67</sup>

President Truman moved more confidently toward legislation for a military assistance program after his re-election. In December 1948 the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Administrator of the Economic Cooperation Administration constituted a Foreign Assistance Coordinating Committee (FACC), one of

whose tasks was the preparation of military assistance legislation. In the winter of 1949, the Department of State, at the direction of the President, took the lead in fashioning the military aid program, with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Defense Department providing expert analysis and sometimes critical restraint. The FACC had by March 1949 developed an outline of prioritized military assistance that would provide "substantial" assistance to the Brussels Pact nations, Canada, and Turkey and limited or token assistance to a number of other non-communist countries in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. The first year assistance would total nearly \$1.8 billion, of which nearly \$1 billion would go to the Brussels Pact nations under the North Atlantic Treaty. The evolution of dollar estimates for military assistance was accompanied by debates within the U.S. Government as to whether the United States would receive base rights from nations receiving assistance. Article 3 of the treaty with the Western European Union afforded a vehicle for reciprocal exchanges, including base rights, under the provision for collaboration and cooperation among the treaty members.

Within days of signing the North Atlantic Treaty, the Brussels Pact nations, Denmark, Norway, and Italy all made formal requests to

the United States for military assistance. Later in April the Truman administration submitted military aid legislation to Congress, but action was delayed until after the ratification of the treaty in late July. After 3 months of lengthy committee hearings and debates in the House and Senate, the Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949 was approved by Congress in late September and signed into law by President Truman. Congress appropriated \$1.4 billion for the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP) in October 1949, and military assistance began flowing to the North Atlantic countries early in 1950 following the establishment of an MDAP program and the conclusion of necessary bilateral agreements.<sup>68</sup>

## Conclusion

The danger of Soviet aggression against war-ravaged Western Europe following the end of World War II led to a drastic change in traditional American foreign policy. After 160 years during which American leaders had avoided peacetime "entangling alliances," the United States in 1948 and 1949 embarked with the non-communist nations of Europe on a search for collective security. The North Atlantic alliance was a recognition of



the growing interdependence of the nations bordering the North Atlantic and an acknowledgment of how much the security of the United States depended on the security of Europe. But even as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization began to form, many recognized that it was more than a means of

repelling rampant communist expansionism. It was a historically unprecedented kind of alliance, based on democratic values that would make possible Europe's postwar recovery, historic integration, and continued freedom.

After 50 years the mutual effort of the United States and its NATO allies still

serves as a shield for an emerging united Europe and has demonstrated the interdependence of the United States and Europe on many levels beyond the vital military relationship. The United States and Europe have come an enormous distance since the difficult

and uncertain days of 1947, but the new challenges that have arisen in Europe make evident that the alliance has not yet lost its purpose. The commitment made by the original allies in 1949 to defend peace, security, and democracy in Europe remains valid today. ■

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Text of a radio address by Secretary Marshall, April 28, 1947, printed in *Department of State Bulletin*, May 11, 1957, pp. 919-924.

<sup>2</sup>See the summary of Europe's problems offered by Under Secretary of State Will Clayton in a May 27, 1947, memorandum, in *Foreign Relations*, 1947, Vol. III, pp. 230-232. A concise summary of the political and economic problems of reconstruction is in David Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe: Western Europe, America, and Postwar Reconstruction* (London: Longman, 1992).

<sup>3</sup>The political crosscurrents of 1947-1948 are outlined in Robert Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945-1948* (New York: Norton, 1977).

<sup>4</sup>Gier Lundestad, *Empire by Integration: The United States and European Integration, 1945-1997* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), outlines the rationale for U.S. support of European unity.

<sup>5</sup>For text of Secretary Marshall's June 5 address, see *A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1941-1949* (Washington, DC, 1985), pp. 806-807.

<sup>6</sup>For text of the Soviet statement rejecting the Marshall Plan, July 2, 1947, see *A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1941-1949*, pp. 807-809. For a senior Communist official's recollections about the

formation of the Comintern and Soviet treatment of West European parties, see Eugenio Reale, *Nascita del Cominform* (Milan, 1958).

<sup>7</sup>Bevin's views are discussed in Don Cook, *Forging the Alliance: NATO, 1945-1960* (New York: Morrow, 1989), pp. 88 ff. and Peter Weiler, *Ernest Bevin* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1993) pp. 176-177.

<sup>8</sup>Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Statesman, 1945-1949* (New York: Viking, 1987), p. 285; Lawrence S. Kaplan, *A Community of Interests: NATO and the Military Assistance Program, 1948-1951*, (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Historical Office, 1980), p. 17. For text of Bevin's note, see *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 3-6.

<sup>9</sup>For texts of the July 1947 JCS directive on policy toward Germany, the March and June 1948 Western statements on German policy, and June 1948 directives on currency reform together with Soviet responses, see *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985* (Washington, DC, 1985), pp. 91-99, 110-113, 124-135, 140-156.

<sup>10</sup>The JCS 570 series, which was approved by President Roosevelt in November 1943, is summarized and quoted in James F. Schnabel, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, Vol. I,

*The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1945-1947*, pp. 63-67.

<sup>11</sup>Kaplan, *A Community of Interests: NATO and the Military Assistance Program, 1948-1951*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>12</sup>For text of President Truman's March 12 address, see *A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1941-1949*, pp. 530-534. A participant's dramatic description of the events from the Greek crisis to the enunciation of the Marshall Plan is Joseph Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks* (New York: Viking, 1955).

<sup>13</sup>See *A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1941-1949*, p. 531.

<sup>14</sup>Record of a meeting among Acheson, Patterson, and Forrestal, March 19, 1947, summarized and quoted from in *Foreign Relations*, 1947, Vol. V, pp. 126-127.

<sup>15</sup>Telegram 795 from Acting Secretary of State Acheson to Secretary of State Marshall in Moscow, April 3, 1947, *Foreign Relations*, 1947, Vol. V, p. 137, and Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made: Acheson, Bohlen, Harriman, Kennan, Lovett, and McCloy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), p. 400. For text of the Greek-Turkish Assistance Act, approved on May 22, 1947, P.L. 75, 80th Congress, see *A Decade of*

*American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1941-1949*, pp. 534-537.

<sup>16</sup>For text of the Brussels Treaty, see the United Nations Treaty Series, 19 UNTS 51. Extracts are printed in *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955: Basic Documents*, Vol. I (Washington, DC, 1957) pp. 968-971, and *Department of State Bulletin*, May 9, 1948, p. 600.

<sup>17</sup>Regarding the President's strong feelings about the menace of aggressive communism, see Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), Vol. I, p. 279. For full text of the President's March 17 speech, see *Department of State Bulletin*, March 28, 1948, pp. 418-420.

<sup>18</sup>The March 11 British aide-memoire and Secretary Marshall's response are printed in *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 46-48. In recalling the quick response to Bevin's inquiry, President Truman assigned to Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak the largest responsibility for promoting the Brussels Pact. See Truman, *Memoirs*, Vol. II, p. 243.

<sup>19</sup>The Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (or Rio Treaty) of September 2, 1947, established precedents critical to the formulation of a North Atlantic pact. The Rio Treaty was regional and defensive in nature as provided under

Articles 51 and 52 of the UN Charter. Articles 1 and 2 of the Rio Treaty established means for member states to achieve peaceful resolution of their outstanding differences, including the use of UN mediation. Article 3 committed the American States to collective defense. Article 4 clearly defined the boundaries of the collective defense arrangement. Most importantly, the U.S. Congress fully supported and endorsed the Rio Pact anchored in the UN Charter. It was a fateful step away from traditional U.S. isolationism. For text of the Rio treaty, see *A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1941-1949*, pp. 226-229.

<sup>20</sup>The exchanges leading to the Pentagon Talks and the record of those secret talks are presented in *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 55 ff.

<sup>21</sup>*Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 85-88; Kenneth W. Condit, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, Vol. II, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1947-1949* (Washington, D.C. 1966), pp. 193-104; and Steven L. Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense*, Vol. I, *The Formative Years, 1947-1950* (Washington, DC, 1984), pp. 462-463.

<sup>22</sup>Truman, *Memoirs*, Vol. II, pp. 244-245.

<sup>23</sup>See *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 101-103; Rearden, *The Formative Years, 1947-1950*, p. 463; Condit, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1947-1949*, p. 195.

<sup>24</sup>Escott Reid, *Time of Fear and Hope: The Making of the North Atlantic Treaty, 1947-1949* (Toronto: McClelland and Stover, 1977), pp. 87-98. Reid was a participant in the negotiations in 1948 and close observer of the succeeding steps to the final treaty. Senator Vandenberg's views are examined in detail in Arthur H. Vandenberg, ed., *The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952).

<sup>25</sup>Memoranda of these two discussions, prepared by Lovett, are printed in *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 82-84, 92-96.

<sup>26</sup>Lawrence S. Kaplan, *The United States and NATO: The Formative Years* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 1984), pp. 70-76, and Rearden, *The Formative Years, 1947-1950*, pp. 461-464. For text of the Vandenberg Resolution, Senate Resolution 239, see *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 135-136.

<sup>27</sup>Secretary Marshall's involvement in the creation of NATO during the last year of his service at the State Department is authoritatively described in Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Statesman, 1945-1959*, pp. 316-329, and Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: Norton, 1969), p. 236. Acheson succeeded Marshall as Secretary of State in January 1949.

<sup>28</sup>George F. Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), p. 413.

<sup>29</sup>T. Michael Ruddy, *The Cautious Diplomat: Charles E. Bohlen and the Soviet Union, 1929-1969* (Kent and London: The Kent State University Press, 1986), pp. 84-85. For text of the April 29 memorandum, see *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 108-109.

<sup>30</sup>Ruddy, *The Cautious Diplomat: Charles E. Bohlen and the Soviet Union, 1929-1969*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>31</sup>Condit, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1947-1949*, pp. 224-226; Kaplan, *The United States and NATO: The Formative Years*, p. 80; *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 188-193.

<sup>32</sup>Condit, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1947-1949*, pp. 219-220. For text of NSC 14/1, July 1, 1948, see *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. I, pp. 585-588.

<sup>33</sup>Plan Half Moon is described in Condit, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1947-1949*, pp. 365-367.

<sup>34</sup>Memorandum of conversation by Bohlen, August 6, 1948; Record of the 12th exploratory meeting, August 16, 1948; and note from Lovett to the French Embassy, September 6, 1948, *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 206-209, 217-219, and 253.

<sup>35</sup>For text of NSC 9/3, see *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 140-141.

<sup>36</sup>The official records of the 10 formal meetings of the Washington Exploratory Talks and the meetings of

working groups set up by the conferees are printed in *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 148-250 *passim*. The discussions are summarized in Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Statesman, 1945-1959*, pp. 328-332.

<sup>37</sup>Minutes of these meetings are in *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 209-214.

<sup>38</sup>Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, pp. 369-370.

<sup>39</sup>For text of the September 9 agreed memorandum by the participants, the so-called "Washington Paper," see *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 237-245. President Truman approved the general principles contained in the September 9 paper; see *ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>40</sup>On the role of the military in the creation of the pact, see Timothy P. Ireland, *Creating the Entangling Alliance: The Origins of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), pp. 121-128, and Reid, *Time of Fear and Hope: The Making of the North Atlantic Treaty, 1947-1949*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>41</sup>The discussions on expanding the charter membership of the Alliance are documented in *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 255-343 *passim*, and summarized in Kaplan, *The United States and NATO: The Formative Years*, p. 83. Marshall's memorandum of his conversation with Swedish Foreign Minister Uden is in *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 264-266.



<sup>42</sup>The military negotiations are described in Condit, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1947-1949*, pp. 197-200.

<sup>43</sup>For text of the December 24 draft treaty, see *Foreign Relations*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 334-337.

<sup>44</sup>Reid, *Time of Fear and Hope: The Making of the North Atlantic Treaty, 1947-1949*, pp. 170-179 *passim*.

<sup>45</sup>For the JCS comments, see *Foreign Relations*, 1949, Vol. IV, pp. 10-13. Truman's address is in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1949*, pp. 112-116.

<sup>46</sup>Lovett chaired one more meeting of alliance Ambassadors on January 14 before resigning effective January 20.

<sup>47</sup>The available records of Secretary Acheson's meetings with Members of Congress in February and March, the meetings of the Washington Exploratory Talks, and the private meetings Acheson had with individual ambassadors during this same period are presented in *Foreign Relations*, 1949, Vol. IV, pp. 66-237. Acheson's own vivid recollections of these consultations are in Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, pp. 277-284.

<sup>48</sup>Acheson's consultations with the ambassadors and with key Senators are

summarized in Kaplan, *The United States and NATO: The Formative Years*, pp. 112-114.

<sup>49</sup>See Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, pp. 370-372, for his meetings with the Senators and subsequent political fallout. Memoranda of the February 7 and 8 meetings with Lange are in *Foreign Relations*, 1949, Vol. IV, pp. 66-73.

<sup>50</sup>Ireland, *Creating the Entangling Alliance*, p. 111.

<sup>51</sup>Weiler, *Ernest Bevin*, pp. 181-182.

<sup>52</sup>Bohlen's various drafts are published in *Foreign Relations*, 1949, Vol. IV, pp. 113-116.

<sup>53</sup>See *Foreign Relations*, 1949, Vol. IV, p. 174.

<sup>54</sup>Kaplan, *The United States and NATO: The Formative Years*, p. 116, points out that some Americans would have preferred identifying Articles 53 and 54 of the UN Charter as the authority for a regional alliance, but this would have made NATO susceptible to review by the UN Security Council where the Soviet Union had a veto.

<sup>55</sup>For text of the treaty, see *A Decade of American Foreign Policy, 1941-1949: Basic Documents*, pp. 936-939.

<sup>56</sup>Secretary Acheson discussed with President Truman on March 2 the pros and cons of Italy's invitation

to the alliance and obtained the President's approval to proceed with the invitation although he would have preferred "certainly at this time a pact without Italy." See the memorandum by the Secretary of State, March 2, 1949, *Foreign Relations*, 1949, Vol. IV, pp. 141-145.

<sup>57</sup>The membership negotiations are described in Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, pp. 277-279. Documentation is presented in *Foreign Relations*, 1949, Vol. IV, pp. 1-285 *passim*.

<sup>58</sup>For a time in early March 1949, the United States and Britain considered, but then abandoned, issuing a public declaration expressing the Atlantic alliance members' interest and support for the security of Greece, Turkey, and perhaps even Iran. The question confronting allied negotiators was whether an expanded NATO alliance without Greece and Turkey (and even Iran) would embolden the Soviet Union to attack or if not, whether the declaration might provide provocation to the Soviet Union. The issue of the NATO declaration is documented in *Foreign Relations*, 1949, Vol. IV, pp. 175-176 and 209-210.

<sup>59</sup>For text of Acheson's March 8 report, see *Foreign Relations*, 1949, Vol. IV, p. 174.

<sup>60</sup>*Foreign Relations*, 1949, Vol. IV, pp. 213-224.

<sup>61</sup>Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, p. 284.

<sup>62</sup>For text of Acheson's and the President's statements as well as those of other conference participants, see *Department of State Bulletin*, April 17, 1949, pp. 471-482.

<sup>63</sup>The efforts of the Soviet Union to counter the negotiation of the Atlantic alliance are described in Kaplan, *The United States and NATO: The Formative Years*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>64</sup>Kaplan, *The United States and NATO: The Formative Years*, p. 124.

<sup>65</sup>Excerpts from the Committee report are printed in *A Decade of American Foreign Policy, 1941-1949: Basic Documents*, pp. 944-957.

<sup>66</sup>Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, p. 285.

<sup>67</sup>Rearden, *The Formative Years, 1947-1950*, pp. 493-496, and Condit, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1947-1949*, pp. 219-226.

<sup>68</sup>The steps within the U.S. Government and the negotiations with the North Atlantic nations is described in detail in Rearden, *The Formative Years, 1947-1950*, Chapter XVII; Condit, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1947-1949*, Chapter 12; and Kaplan, *A Community of Interests: NATO and the Military Assistance Program, 1948-1951*. ■

***The Origins of***  
**NATO**  
***THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION***

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# Foreword

There is much to celebrate in the history of NATO's first half-century. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has been the most successful alliance of all time. It has deterred aggression and defended its borders, maintained its unity and safeguarded democracy. It has allowed a generation to grow up in prosperity and peace. Its success can be measured not in battles won, but in lives saved, liberty preserved, and hope shared with freedom-loving peoples everywhere.

NATO was forged in the aftermath of Holocaust and war, by the survivors of war, to prevent war. NATO brought together nations that shared a community of interests and a commitment to democratic values. America's special goal in this effort was to draw the nations of Europe together to help guard against a resurgence of the conflict that had twice in 30 years drawn our troops across the Atlantic and plunged them into war.

But, as this short history reminds us, NATO's success was by no means foreordained. Its negotiation and adoption alone required the best efforts of diplomats, militaries and legislators in each member nation. Its endurance depended—and still depends—on the dedication of each ally to the principles upon which it was founded. Readers of these pages will be struck by the important role that congressional leaders of both parties played in supporting NATO's creation and influencing its shape. In recent years, we have seen a reprise of that role, as a bipartisan group of Senators and Representatives has contributed counsel and strong public backing to the effort to enlarge NATO and prepare it for new missions.

Thus looking backward to NATO's history inspires us to look forward with confidence. Since NATO was formed, our world has been transformed. But the destinies of Europe and North America remain inseparable. As President Clinton welcomes the leaders of our 18 NATO allies and 25 partner nations to NATO's Washington Summit, we will be looking ahead to NATO's next 50 years.

The NATO Summit will issue a blueprint for the future in the form of a new Strategic Concept for the Alliance. That document will recognize that, while our essential goals remain unchanged, the risks we face have been transformed by the end of the Cold War and the steady advance of technology.

In Washington, our leaders will agree on the design of an Alliance that is strengthened by new members; an Alliance that is more flexible; an Alliance committed to collective defense and capable of meeting a wide range of threats to its common interests; and an Alliance that works in partnership with other nations and organizations to advance security, prosperity, and democracy in and for the entire Euro-Atlantic region.

Our Alliance is and must remain a Euro-Atlantic institution that acts by consensus. But we must be prepared to prevent, deter, and respond to the full spectrum of threats to Alliance interests and values.

And when we respond, it only makes sense to use the unified military structure and cooperative habits we have developed over the past 50 years. This approach should not be controversial. We've been practicing it successfully in Bosnia since 1995.

We are also taking steps to ensure that NATO's military forces are designed, equipped, and prepared for 21st century missions. It is with this in mind, as well, that we support the development within NATO of a European Security and Defense Identity—by which we mean an increased capability for Europeans, acting together, to assume a greater share of our common responsibilities. And we expect the Summit to produce an initiative that responds to the grave threat posed by weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

This will also be the first Summit to include NATO's three newest members—the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. As the reader of this history will learn, the United States has from the beginning sought to open NATO to all who would, and could, share in its goals and take on its duties. These three nations have proven their ability to meet Alliance responsibilities, uphold Alliance values, and defend Alliance interests.

This is NATO's first enlargement since the Cold War's end, but, as our leaders will reconfirm in Washington, it will not be NATO's last. The door of the Alliance remains open, and we will continue to help prepare aspiring members to meet NATO's high standards.

From the beginning, NATO has been part of an interlocking set of Euro-Atlantic institutions. Today, NATO is a central pillar of a community that is increasingly secure, prosperous, and democratic. It is more important than ever that the Alliance work with other countries and institutions to extend stability throughout this broader region. We seek to erase, and not replace, the lines that divided Europe.

For that reason, the Alliance has forged the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the Partnership for Peace to develop close and cooperative relationships with 25 other nations.

In collaboration with regional institutions, we are encouraging the resolution of old antagonisms, promoting tolerance, and ensuring the protection of minority rights. Thus NATO can do its part to help realize, for the first time in history, the dream of a Europe whole and free.

Although a great many things have changed since April 1949, that dream which motivated our predecessors is alive—and well. Our Alliance still is bound together by a community of interests. Our strength still is a source of strength to those everywhere who labor for freedom and peace. Our power still shields those who love the law and still threatens none except those who would threaten others with aggression and harm.

Our Alliance has endured because the principles it defends are timeless and because they reflect the deepest aspirations of the human spirit.

It is our mission now, working across the Atlantic, to carry on the best traditions of the past 50 years and prepare NATO to defend our principles and values in the century ahead. Encouraged by the example of those who came before us, we will dedicate our best efforts to that end.

*Madeline Albright*

# Preface

This study was prepared in response to a request from the National Security Council. It is intended to provide essential historical background for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty on April 4, 1949. The basis of the study was the official historical record of American foreign policy published in the Department of State's historical documentary series *Foreign Relations of the United States*. Relevant historical publications prepared by the Historical Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff also were consulted along with memoirs, authoritative biographies, and historical studies by academic experts. A chronology has been included to afford readers a convenient context and timeline to understand the negotiations and consultations of 1948 and 1949.

This study seeks to remind readers of some essential milestones in the conception, negotiation, and conclusion of the North Atlantic Treaty. No new research has been undertaken, and a thorough and detailed account of the negotiations or evaluation of the context, motives of participants, or consequences of the events of 1948 and 1949 for an Atlantic alliance has not been attempted. The choice of scholarly works cited in the study is not intended to represent an official judgment as to their special merit as against any other of the many books and articles written about the North Atlantic Treaty or bearing upon the events leading up to its signing. This is an attempt at assembling some basic facts to help give some greater meaning to the commemoration of this 50th anniversary. As is the case in the writing of most history, more time, more research, and more advice would result in a perhaps different and certainly more complete review of these memorable events.

James E. Miller of the Office of the Historian did the original research and writing from which this study emerged. Rita M. Baker edited the study and prepared the chronology.

William Slany  
The Historian  
Department of State



# Chronology of Agreements, Declarations, and Negotiations

V-E Day	May 8, 1945	End of the war in Europe
Moscow Council of Foreign Ministers and Secretary of State Marshall's report	March-April 1947	Marshall warned about the slow recovery of Europe and Western differences with the U.S.S.R.
President Truman's speech	March 12, 1947	Proposed military and economic aid to Greece and Turkey
Greek-Turkish aid approved by U.S Congress	May 22, 1947	Congressional approval of military and economic assistance to Greece and Turkey
Secretary Marshall's address	June 5, 1947	Proposed for Marshall Plan; invitation to the European nations to submit plans for a European recovery effort
Conference of the Committee of European Economic Cooperation, Paris	June 27-July 1, 1947	Produced European recovery program, proposed courses of action, and estimated costs; Soviet Premier Stalin rejected the Marshall Plan for the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe
National Security Act approved by U.S. Congress	July 26, 1947	Provided for a comprehensive program for the future security of the U.S. and to coordinate and integrate U.S. policies and procedures to that end
Inter-American Treaty for Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty)	September 2, 1947	Established mutual defense pact among the American Republics, including the U.S.
Creation of Communist Information Bureau (Cominform)	October 5, 1947	Created to coordinate activity of European communist parties; ensured Soviet control of national communist parties
London Council of Foreign Ministers	December 1947	Confirmed East-West deadlock
Communist coup in Czechoslovakia	February 1948	Communist government took over on June 7
Brussels Treaty	March 17, 1948	Created Western European Union (Brussels Pact); members promised to come to each other's aid in case of attack
President Truman's address	March 17, 1948	Expressed support for the Western European Union
Pentagon Talks	March 23-April 1, 1948	Secret U.S.-British-Canadian military staff talks
Economic Cooperation Act approved by U.S. Congress	April 3, 1948	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislative implementation of the European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan) for the economic recovery of Europe</li> <li>• \$4 billion appropriated for the first year</li> </ul>

NSC 9, "Position of the United States With Respect to Support for the Western Union and Other Related Free Countries"	April 13, 1948	Expressed U.S. support for but not membership in the Brussels Pact, pledged to explore larger mutual defense agreement based on Article 51 of the UN Charter
Establishment of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC)	April 16, 1948	Agreement among 16 non-communist European nations to work together in using Marshall Plan aid
Congress of Europe Meeting, The Hague	May 7, 1948	Discussed plans for establishing a European political union
NSC 9/2, "Position of the United States With Respect to Support for the Western Union and Other Related Free Countries"	May 11, 1948	Emphasized the need for Senate consultation on possible alliance and called for exploratory diplomatic and military talks with European nations; called on West European nations to improve defense efforts
Creation of the State of Israel	May 14, 1948	The U.S. and U.S.S.R. recognized Israel on May 16
Western agreements on Germany	June 7, 1948	Communiqué announced U.S.-British-Benelux agreement on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International control of the Ruhr,</li> <li>• German representation in the Marshall Plan,</li> <li>• Integration of the Western zones of Germany,</li> <li>• Drafting a federal constitution for Germany</li> </ul>
Vandenberg Resolution	June 11, 1948	Advised the President to seek U.S. and free world security through support of mutual defense arrangements that operated within the UN Charter but outside the UN Security Council
Berlin blockade and airlift	June 24, 1948-May 11, 1949	Soviet blockage of access to Berlin and subsequent U.S. supply by air of the city
NSC 9/3, "Position of the United States With Respect to Support for the Western Union and Other Related Free Countries"	June 28, 1948	NSC authorization to seek means, within the terms of the Vandenberg Resolution, to provide military support to the free nations of Western Europe
NSC 14/1, "Position of the United States With Respect to Providing Military Assistance to nations of the Non-Soviet World"	July 1, 1948	Called for legislation to permit military assistance to selected non-communist nations in Europe in order to strengthen their military capabilities to resist communist expansion
House Un-American Activities Committee hearings	July 30, 1948	Whittaker Chambers confessed to being a communist; identified former State Department official Alger Hiss as a Communist Party agent
Washington Exploratory Talks	July-September 1948	Negotiations over the basic scope and structure of the North Atlantic alliance

Washington Paper	September 9, 1948	Paper submitted to participating governments at the Exploratory Talks summing up the discussions and consensus reached on the membership of the alliance
Re-election of President Truman	November 2, 1948	Surprise victory in the U.S. national elections
Ambassadorial Working Group meeting	December 10-24, 1948	Prepared draft of the North Atlantic Treaty
Dean Acheson entry on duty as Secretary of State	January 21, 1949	Secretary of State Marshall resigned in December 1948
North Atlantic Treaty	April 4, 1949	Signed by 12 nations; created the North Atlantic Treaty Organization for collective defense
Creation of the Federal Republic of Germany	May 8, 1949	Germany adopted the Basic Laws of the Federal Republic
U.S. Senate approval of the North Atlantic Treaty	July 21, 1949	On being assured that the treaty preserved congressional prerogatives
Truman request to Congress	July 21, 1949	Requested \$1.45 billion for military assistance to Europe
Entry into force of the North Atlantic Treaty	August 24, 1949	Canada was the first to ratify (May 3) and Italy the last (August 24)
First North Atlantic Council session	September 17, 1949	Held in Washington and chaired by Secretary Acheson
White House announcement	September 23, 1949	Soviet detonation of an atomic bomb
Mutual Defense Assistance Act signed by President Truman	October 6, 1949	Authorized \$1.165 billion in military assistance to NATO countries
UN General Assembly adoption of "Essentials of Peace" Resolution	December 1, 1949	U.S.-British-sponsored resolution affirming the principles of the UN Charter and requesting members to cooperate to ease world tensions; submitted in response to a Soviet-sponsored resolution against the North Atlantic Treaty alliance
North Korean invasion of South Korea	June 25, 1950	Beginning of the Korean conflict
UN General Assembly adoption of "Uniting for Peace" Resolution	November 3, 1950	Gave the General Assembly the right to recommend collective security measures if the use of the veto in the Security Council prevented UN action
Conference of NATO Foreign Ministers, Brussels	December 18, 1950	Approved plans for the defense of Western Europe, including U.S. use of nuclear weapons if necessary to defend NATO nations
General Eisenhower appointment as Supreme Commander of North Atlantic Soviet Forces	December 19, 1950	Appointed by NATO Foreign Ministers with responsibility to create a force capable of repulsing an armed attack

Senate approval of U.S. troops for NATO	April 4, 1951	Approved deployment of four divisions of the U.S. Army to Europe but requested that the President consult with Congress before sending additional troops
U.S.-British-French Agreement	September 10, 1951	Agreed to replace the West German occupation statute and use West German troops in a European army
Greek and Turkish membership in NATO	September 20, 1951	Approved at the NATO Council meeting in Ottawa; NATO formal admission took place on February 18, 1952
End of U.S. Marshall Plan aid	December 31, 1951	Mutual Security Agency replaced the OEEC; \$7.2 billion provided under the Mutual Security Program for Economic, Military, and Technical Aid to Europe
Peace Conventions signed at Bonn	May 26, 1952	End of Allied (U.S., Britain, France) occupation of Germany
Creation of European Defense Community	May 27, 1952	Intended to unify West European defense plans and bind West Germany to European defense; included a NATO protocol with West Germany to extend NATO guarantees to that nation and a U.S. and British declaration that agreed to regard a threat to the EDC as a threat to their security; rejected by France in August 1954
U.S. Senate ratification of NATO protocol	July 1, 1952	Ratified NATO protocol with West Germany extending NATO guarantees
West German membership in NATO	May 5, 1955	Federal Republic of Germany became the 15th member pursuant to gaining sovereign status
Formation of the Warsaw Pact	May 14, 1955	Soviet response to West German troops in NATO; signed by eight East European nations ■